

Once Upon a Wendigo

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Once Upon a Wendigo

by [AndallitsGlory](#)

Summary

As a teenager, Will saves a fairy queen and finds himself "blessed" with the title of Fairy Prince. Such benefits (see: not) include the understanding of chattering animals, boundless adventures with (murderous) magical creatures, and 90% of men aggressively trying to propose marriage to him. Will finds his way, though, even when one the strangest creatures he's ever met starts hanging around his woods...

Notes

All the credit goes to my friend, Megan, for this idea. She basically comes up with the best Hannibal AU fic ideas ever and this one was just so compelling I had to give it a shot.

Thanks to teaberryblue for the beta!

Prologue

Once upon a time, a young teenager fished in one of Virginia's finer rivers. As he enjoyed the rush of icy water passing between his thighs, he heard a tiny sound like the tinkling of bells coming from the direction of the woods. He ignored it at first, his concentration funneled toward the rod, sheltering him from the outside world. Only when the third fish slipped by him did he finally turn his head in acknowledgement and put aside his line to investigate.

At the edge of the brush, he found a glowing ball of light, like a Christmas ornament, caught in one of the bushes. Closer inspection revealed the tiny woman inside of the ball, her hair and limbs desperately tangled in the thorns. Her cheeks bled from multiple scratches, her body was emaciated, and she looked very much to be near her last breath.

The teenager ran back to his fishing gear to grab his tiny scissors, which he often used to style his own lures. Now, he put them to the test of cutting the tiny woman free from her horrible entanglement. On his last snip, she floated upward with her ragged white dress hanging sadly from her starved frame, peering up at him with eyes as pink and as dazzling as the sunrise.

"Thank you, good sir," the woman said and the teen winced as her voice hit his ears like tinnitus. "I do believe you have saved my life."

"Um," the teen said, surely as charismatic and gracious as every boy his age, "you're welcome, I guess. Sorry, but what the hell are you?"

"Of course. I am Queen Mayera, of the Virginia Fairy Monarchy. I rule this land from Fairfax to Lee," said Queen Mayera, bowing prim and proper. "And you, brave sir?"

"Will Graham?" he said, like he wasn't certain of it.

"I am deeply honored to meet you, Will Graham. In return for your heroism, I insist on bestowing a gift upon you."

"Um," Will said again, practicing his charm for when he'll need it later on in life, "I mean, that's okay. You don't have to."

"No, no, really," she said. "I bestow upon you honorable fairy nobility. From this point on, you are Fairy Prince Will Graham of Fairfax, Virginia. My people will throw huge celebrations in your honor! We will weave you flower crowns of only the greatest blooms we know! We will sing your name in ecstasy as the moon rises to see the sun every day! You will be remembered!"

"A fairy prince," Will said. His face slid into disgust. "This is one of Jason Maritz's dumb jokes, isn't it?"

"Who is this Jason Maritz?" the fairy asked, unable to possibly know that Jason Maritz was that asshole who shoved Will's head into his locker every morning and last week sprinkled

ghost pepper into his school lunch. Jason Maritz forgot Will's name half the time.

Will rolled his eyes and walked away, back toward the safety of the river. Alarmed, the fairy flew after him, waving her arms.

“Wait, wait! I can give you more! I bestow upon you the gifts of endless adventures! Wealth, if you desire it! Men, always falling at your feet! You will be recognized by human beings as well as fairies for the greatness you so possess!”

Will muttered under his breath, casting his line back into the ice. He enveloped himself back into the narrow tunnel of concentration, welcoming the monotony even more than the possibility of a bite. He did not know that the fairy's gifts had already come through. He had already become Prince Fairy Will Graham of Fairfax, Virginia.

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Prince William of Fairfax, Virginia meets Jack Crawford, head of the FBI. It doesn't go well.

Chapter Notes

Hey all, thanks for all your comments and kudos on the prologue!

The flower crown referenced in this chapter with is of course a reference to the flower crown Hugh Dancy was given at the Fannibal Meet-Up in 2014. Astrakiseki on tumblr made it and her explanation for the flowers' symbolism can be found here:

<http://astrakiseki.tumblr.com/post/55929035725/so-you-might-have-noticed-with-the-crown-given-to>

Will could smell the desperation on Jack Crawford as the sturdy man entered the lecture room. He made the polite small chat, all the while averting his eyes and tightening his grip on the podium. His students had, at least, all left. Jack had certainly come in here with a purpose, but he would want something else within the next few minutes. Will knew his type.

“May I?” asked Jack before reaching out to adjust Will’s glasses. Will didn’t so much as give him the go-ahead, but allowed him. The day had run long like the slow unspooling of fishing line and Jack’s fingers lingered on his frames. The quicker Will could get this conversation over with, the better. Then, came the dreaded question, “Where do you fall on the spectrum?”

Oh. Well, actually, that wasn’t the dreaded question. Will suppressed a sigh. Even when the men approached him in a new way, it didn’t get easier. “My horse is hitched to a post that is closer to Asperger’s and autistics than—“

He saw the dam crack over Crawford’s face before the bureau head actually dropped to his knees.

“You are the most beautiful man I ever met,” he said. “Will, will you marry me?”

Will had long lost count of how many times this had happened to him over the last 20 years. It never got any less embarrassing.

Jack waited as Will checked his fingernails for dirt, then rifled through his briefcase and other bags to make sure that he had all his paperwork in order. Yes, yes that was good. He should be able to submit all his grades in time for the end of this semester, provided no obstacles emerged. A solid minute and a half passed with Jack kneeling before Will decided to take pity on him.

“You can get up now, Jack.”

Jack blinked, dazed, and rose to his feet. “What? I’m sorry. Did I just—? I have no idea—“

“It happens all the time,” Will said, trying and failing to not sound as horrified as he felt.

“I’m already married,” Jack blurted out. “Happily. Very happily.”

“Glad to hear it. As I was saying...” Will shoved his laptop case into Jack’s arms. He had as little romantic intention as Jack did now, but the other man still wanted something from him. Will could work with that. He had rejected all full-time fairy couriers long ago, but a little help walking his things to his car was still nice once in awhile. “I am not a narcissist or sociopath, but I can empathize with them. I can empathize with anyone, in fact. It’s less to do with a personality disorder than an active imagination.”

Jack, floating adrift within his own horror, at first seemed at loss for anything to reply. The awkward silence stretched with them through the academy’s hallways and out the door. He finally spoke as they passed the trees in front, which held some fairies giggling at each other between the leaves. They liked to spy on Will like a permanent paparazzi. Other humans didn’t see them. Will always ignored them.

“Provided I didn’t just destroy any potential of us working together,” Jack said. “I was hoping that I could borrow your imagination.”

All of Will’s muscles uncoiled as he stepped onto his porch and unlocked his door. Inside the house, the familiar growls and yaps burst into a chorus.

“DAD! DAD! DAD! OH MY GOD! DAD’S HOME! DAD! DAD! DAD!”

“Hey kids,” Will said as the door swung open. He collapsed onto the ground so all six canines could surround him, sniffing and licking all the day’s sweat off his brow.

“DAD! DAD! I SAW A SQUIRREL IN THE WINDOW TODAY, DAD!” said Buster.

“DAD! DAD! I NAPPED ON THE HEARTH LIKE YOU TOLD ME I COULD, IT WAS REALLY NICE, THANK YOU!” said Winston.

“DAD! DAD! STELLA THREW UP AND I ATE IT!” said Uma.

“IT WAS AWESOME!” said Stella.

“Ugh, wonderful,” Will said, batting them all away just enough so that he had room to stand up. He unbuttoned his shirt as he walked into the kitchen. “Who’s hungry for some real food?”

Soon after turning 18, Will ran off to live in the woods. Much to his chagrin, Queen Mayera approved of this, declaring that it befitted his honorary fairy nature to separate himself from human civilization. He almost ran straight back to civilization to spite her, if not for Jason Maritz proposing to him. Once that occurred, he was not interested in living anywhere where humans splattered onto him like birds into windows.

The woods turned out to naturally provide more support for him anyway. He always had at least one feathered neighbor willing to work as his living alarm clock (“hey, asshole! Wakey, wakey!”) and he and the dogs could roam free like a true pack. Sure, old ladies still tried to pester him into asking their cats why they hated them and he had to turn vegetarian after hearing both fish and deer sob for their lives one too many times, but he made it work.

The woods were quiet. They were safe. They were good.

Well, they didn’t feel so safe the moment after he put down the dog bowls, in which he looked up into his kitchen window and found a black face staring back at him.

But, you know, usually.

He screamed and the black face, crowned with black antlers, fled. He sure felt like an asshole then. After saving Queen Mayera from her doom, he saw all kinds of creatures, not just fairies. He had built up a solid rapport with the herd of centaurs that lived a few clicks down south from his house. He even teared up a little upon seeing a unicorn for the first time (right before it tried to impale him). Hell, one of his exes lived a few years as a frog. Whatever his strange visitor was, it was unlikely it meant him harm.

“Dad, the hell?” Bruno asked.

“Shush,” Will said, opening the window’s latch and lifting up the frame. He poked his head out to see if he could make an apology. Nope, he realized as he scanned the empty scenery. Too late. Not only was his visitor gone, the diurnal animals had all packed it in for the night, which was still too fresh for the nocturnal animals to start their routines, so not a single pair of eyes looked back at him. “Sorry. Ignore me.”

“Gladly,” Stella said, yawning.

Before he could mock her back, his phone rang. Sighing at the hints of a busy night ahead, he shut the window and plucked his phone out of his pocket. Alana was calling. “Couldn’t wait until tomorrow to hear my voice?”

“My aunt wants to know what kind of flowers you want in your crown this year and no, this apparently cannot wait,” Alana said. He could hear the smile in her voice. “How are you doing?”

“I met Jack Crawford again today.”

“Oh, really? How’d that go?”

“He proposed.”

“Goddamnit.” She laughed in spite of both of them. Alana was not the only person in Will’s life who knew of his predicament and title, but due to her half fairy heritage (Will had always been too afraid to ask which half) she understood all the details. “Okay, but afterward he asked you about the Minnesota Shrike case, right?”

“He did and thank you for the recommendation.”

“I just want to warn you again, he’s a hard man to work with.”

“I think I can deal with that. He didn’t take the rejection as badly as many before him.” Will wrinkled his nose. “Red and white poppies and white daisies this year.”

“Music to my ears. Last year you made it like pulling teeth.”

“What can I say,” Will said dryly, opening the door to let the dogs outside, “I’m just trying to give our people the happily ever after they deserve.”

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Prince William of Fairfax, Virginia meets brand new FBI buddies and continues to have a rather exasperating life.

Chapter Notes

YOU FANNIBALS ROCK!!! Thanks so much for your kudos and comments! Hope you enjoy this next chapter. :)

The first sip of coffee had barely graced Will's lips when the sound of thundering hooves shook his home. The dogs jumped to their feet, screaming obscenities at the door, and Will had to throw about a half dozen tennis balls into the other room until Buster—the main instigator of chaos—finally ran after them, bringing the rest of the pack with him. Will snuck outside as quickly as he could manage without the spilling the unsteady coffee over the rim of his mug and looked out from the porch into the centaur's eyes.

Well, centauress. Pelagia, a blonde, olive-skinned woman from the waist up and a sleek Palomino from the hips down had a much more even temper than her two brothers. Hector and Findlay, although not the worst magical creatures Will had ever come across, tended to stomp and snort whenever he overstayed his welcome and he had trouble articulating to them for quite some time that he absolutely did not want them using his lawn as their grazing spots. Ever.

Pelagia, on the other hand, once guided Alana to his house when she turned the wrong direction in the woods, and even chased a wolf away from Bruno despite Bruno's lack of appreciation. Will liked her. He thought she liked him too, although centaurs made it even harder to tell than humans.

"William," she said, in her high, whinnying voice. They wouldn't call him Will; he had only been able to haggle them down so far from Fairy-Human Prince William the Curly-Haired of the Virginia Lands and Streams, "please come with me."

Centaurs never liked to ask anything of humans, but he read the signal off her trembling hands. He ran back inside to pour his coffee in a thermos and to grab his gun and jacket. The dogs leaped up and scratched at his legs, now begging pathetically to come with him ("we can help! We can hunt! We can chase!"), but he pushed them aside ("you know you can't, you hate the centaurs more than they hate you."). He followed Pelagia through bramble and

trees, pushing forward with a single-minded effort. The squirrels called his name, the birds yelled insults, even a toad tried to interfere as he passed. He did not live a moment of true peace out here—yet it still came better than a life surrounded by other humans.

He couldn't bite back a gasp as Pelagia brought him somewhere near the river. There, cradled in Hector's arms, laid Findlay. He had been opened from throat to chest, red viscera spilling out onto the grass. The blood had spread so that it even caught in his strawberry mane, matting it black against his neck. The stallion flesh looked shrunken and crinkled, like paper dampened and then dried. His limbs had tangled into themselves, contorting in a painful position, and Will had to resist the urge to approach solely to straighten them out again.

Pelagia whinnied a cry. "He was alive when I'd left."

And how horrible that must have been. That explained why Findlay's jaw stood crooked and agape, the last semblance of his screaming.

"William," Hector said from the ground. Tears carved wild paths down his cheeks, "you must save him."

Will looked at Pelagia, then back at her brothers. Hector was coated with blood up to his elbows, his stomach and two front legs in a pool of red. He knew that they had had illusions about his fairy abilities. He hadn't know how deep they had gone. "I'm sorry, but... there's nothing I can do here. I can't bring anyone back to life."

"You must save his soul, Fairy-Human Prince William the Curly-Haired of the Virginia Lands and Streams."

Pelagia shot her remaining brother a pleading look. "Hector, he won't help us if you speak to him like this!"

"No, no, it's alright," Will said. He bit his lip, skirting his gaze from the blankness in Findlay's. Whoever had created the cavern in the centaur's chest had done so in a long, neat line. They had then dug for something inside. Even with Hector's disruption of the scene, he could tell that. "If you can get up, Hector, I'll do my best to find out who did this."

Hector needed his sister's assistance to stand, all four legs trembling. He looked like a grotesque masterpiece, a modern canvas with red paint thrown haphazardly over his front. His grief poured out in black waves, undulating in the space all around them. Will had to tear his eyes away from the siblings so that he could take a few steps forward and cast his energy down at the dead brother.

The gold pendulum swung in the darkness behind his eyelids. One. Two. Three.

The night holds the world in the palm of her hand. Nothing makes a sound other than her cheerful crickets, who compose a tune in honor of her luscious beauty, and the occasional scratch of a raccoon's paw. The other creatures came from her womb. I did not.

Will backed off from the field at a certain angle, where he had seen the disturbed ground. A tree with a particularly thick trunk thrived in this place. When he stepped behind it, he could see the spot where Findlay would have stood. But Findlay would not have seen him.

I hunger. This was not the first time I found him and his family, but it was the only time I had ever found any of them alone. He's angry, digging at the ground with one of his front hooves. Too angry to hear me sneak up, even though in other circumstances he would be a dangerous beast. Now he's just a beast that could feed me twice over.

Will stepped carefully forward. One... two... he must have leaped here...three.

The beast screams and bucks as I land on his back. We battle skin-to-skin, monster versus beast, him writhing under my power and my stubbornness matching his will. I will tame him. I will domesticate him. And just as he begins to wither with exhaustion, I do it. With one quick motion, I slit him.

He felt the air suck into Pelagia and Hector's lungs as he knelt beside the body and lifted the skin flaps. They hadn't come out evenly, he could see the sharp pattern at the ends. He frowned, puzzled. He had never seen a knife that made that kind of impression, although whatever the killer had used seemed very sophisticated. Pulling the flaps out further, he didn't have to look far into the body to find what had been taken—the killer had ripped out Findlay's heart.

He straightened up and took a step back. Blood spread up his wrists as he rubbed his hands together, unconsciously. Lady MacBeth's famous words came to mind and he felt a strange unease, like the brownish red might creep up to his throat and suffocate him as it did the grass beneath Findlay's body.

"What do you see?" Pelagia asked, words quavering. Hector turned away abruptly and dunked his head over a bush. He made horrible retching noises ten times louder than any human. "What did this?"

"I'm not sure yet," Will admitted. "But I'll find them."

"Is that a promise from the man or the Fairy Prince?"

"If it were anyone else, I would say the man," Will said, because in the case of other humans that was all he gave. But even if it was thrust upon him, he was still monarchy. When it came to magical creatures--fairies, centaurs, unicorns, angels--he had certain responsibilities. Of course, there was also the addition that this was horribly close to home. "But you're my neighbors and this troubles me. So I say, Pelagia, you can call this a royal promise. I will bring justice to whatever killed your brother."

Elise Nichols' peaceful form actually soothed him after seeing Findlay's guts. Will regretted closing his eyes and having the pendulum swing him away. He regretted the surges of violence that thrummed up his body and the feeling of her delicate throat giving between his hands.

So he was less annoyed than he gave off when Agent Beverly Katz startled him awake. He met the woman's impish eyes with indignation and said, "You're not supposed to be in here."

"I found antler velvet in two of the wounds," she said. He turned from her to the body, frowning. Antler velvet. Used for the promotion of healing and improvement of general health. He himself collected it religiously in early autumn, when the stags rubbed their antlers off on tree trunks, to apply it to himself, the dogs, and the inevitable woodland animal he found injured. Could a potential serial killer really be so... kind? "You're not real FBI?"

Will fidgeted under her scrutiny, resisting the urge to back out of the door. "I'm a special investigator."

"Never been an FBI agent?" she asked, clearly disbelieving.

"The, um, strict screening procedures," he said. Actually, Will had been through screening procedures three times. Gender progression had only pushed the FBI so far—it was still filled with mostly men and Will had the luck that all three of his observing officers were men. Men who did not like their marriage proposals rejected.

He hoped that the darkness of the room hid his reddening face from Katz.

"Detects instability." She grinned and jutted her chin at him. "You unstable?"

He sighed in exasperation. "I like to think that everything surrounding me is unstable and that I am the solitary point of sanity."

She had a good, hearty laugh at that. Keep laughing, he thought, suspecting that they would see quite a bit of each other for the rest of this investigation. You'll find out what I mean sooner rather than later.

"Funny as you are smart, good for you," she said, thumping him on the arm as Jack returned to the room.

"You're not supposed to be in here," Jack said, followed by two more agents. They must have been the Price and Zeller he mentioned earlier down in the Nichols' kitchen. Will shuffled himself away from the center of the room.

"It's fine," Will said, giving Katz a considering look. She watched him without blinking. He thought he might like her, actually. She hadn't come onto him yet, but still had a sharp wit about her. They could go toe-to-toe. "I think I've got everything I needed."

Katz repeated her findings to the three men and the four of them started to discuss the velvet amongst themselves. The younger of the two investigators that came with Jack started mouthing off about how deer killed using their bodily weight. Will suppressed an eye roll. He knew this guy's type.

He lingered by the window, meaning to stay out of the conversation for as long as possible. But as Jack began to review everything they knew about the body, Will could hear the pieces that the man was missing.

“Antler velvet is rich in nutrients, he could have put it there on purpose,” Will said, referring to the killer. He felt Zeller and Price’s eyes fall on him. Oh God. He kept his gaze fixed on Jack, determined to work past them. “He wanted to undo as much as he did, given that he had already killed her.”

“He put her back where he found her,” Jack said, a silent why trailing along the end of his observation.

“Whatever he did to the others, he couldn’t do it to—Damnit,” Will said as the younger of the two investigators approached him and fell to his knees.

“ZELLER!” Jack shouted over whatever Zeller started to say to Will. Will looked everywhere but Zeller, mostly at the ceiling. From the corner of his eye, he caught a glimpse of Price and Katz staring in shock and...was that delight? Oh, of course it was delight. Zeller would hear about this day for the rest of his career at the bureau. “On your feet!”

“I will not marry you,” Will said and, just in case Zeller wouldn’t hear the first time, said it ten more times,

“IwillnotmarryyouIwillnotmarryyouIwillnotmarryyouIwillnotmarryyouIwillnot...”

“What are you doing?” Katz shrieked as Price covered his mouth with his hands. Both of them looked very much like they had only just found out that it was their birthday. “What the fuck, Zeller?”

“Is this going to happen every step of the investigation?” Jack demanded, face scrunched up in righteous anger. Under the surface, Will expected that he was very, very relieved to chastise Zeller for his own mistake. In fact, one of Jason Maritz’s friends asked Will to prom a week after he rejected Jason Maritz and the friend got his ass kicked. Will did not go to prom in the end. But he still got elected Prom King.

“Only if you bring in new men every day,” Will said, catching Katz’s eye. She burst into a fresh set of giggles and turned to face the wall. If the Nichols heard the commotion downstairs, they probably thought very poorly of their country’s federal services at the moment. “So I probably should meet the entire team as soon as possible.”

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Prince William of the Virginia Lands and Streams gets so much done in this chapter because he's super busy Fairy Royalty. And he's still irritated about it.

Chapter Notes

ENJOY, MY LOVES

Chapter 3

“Just endure it,” Alana said through her teeth, her smile straining into a manic mask. At the same time, her hand tightened so hard on Will’s that he feared she might crush it. “It’s only a few more hours. Just. Deal.”

Easy for her to say, Will thought, as at least a couple dozen fairies brought their chariot into the air. The crowd, full of pixies and cherubim and other species Will never bothered to name, shrilled at once like a chorus. This was his twentieth year forced to play the main decoration to the parade meant to be in his honor. After his first year followed with hours of sobbing, he knew he couldn’t do it again alone again.

Enter Alana. Sweet, blessed Alana who knew exactly when to flutter her eyelashes in his direction in order to fool her crazy Aunt Mayera. Now Mayera not only believed that she had been rescued by the most dashing human male in the world, but also that she had discovered the perfect bride for him.

“Their singing is stabbing into my ears like a million needles,” he complained. The bravery he had summoned all throughout the last week had petered out by the time a group of cherubs had swarmed him on his way to the carriage. “Did they put thorns in this crown? If it excavates any further, it’s going to find my skull.”

Alana’s lips crept further back, showing more of her pearly whites.

“I wanna go home and bury myself in dogs,” he said and slumped against his throne in limp protest.

“Yeah, well, having to hang out with you every year on this day isn’t quite like sex with a seraph,” she said. He must have sincerely pissed her off because Alana rarely ever went crude

on him. He pushed his drooping flower crown further up his scalp and frowned.

“Your new girlfriend, whoever she is, probably wouldn’t like that anyway.”

“My girlfriend is an angel in her own right.” Alana’s smile relaxed a little into sincerity. “And if you don’t stop pouting at me, I am never introducing you.”

This shut him up for about five minutes, long and arduous as they were. The crowd started showering them with baby’s breath, a few of which caught up his nose and somehow got into his mouth. He spat them out and crossed his arms. Maybe he could take a nap for the rest of the event. Would anyone really notice? They never cottoned on to any of his other signs of discomfort and only patted his cheeks when he looked moody at the feast they hosted afterward.

“Is ‘sex with a seraph’ a common expression or...?” he asked.

“Well, I’ve never had the privilege, but I’m told it’s a heavenly experience,” she said, with seemingly no idea of the pun she had made. He squinted at her anyway. She dropped her voice, “You know, who you really want to tumble with is the bad boys.”

“Yeah?” Will said, pretending that he knew what the “bad boys” were.

“Daemons, ghouls, goblins,” she said, clarifying with a wink instead of a calling out. “Long fingers, long tongues, and they’re surprisingly gentle when you need them to be.”

“I cannot tell if you’re serious or trying to pull one over on me.”

She laughed that charming laugh of hers and gave a gracious wave to a sizable group of changelings hanging at the edge of the barrier, barely holding themselves back from the proceedings. “Oh, I should say a little of both.”

By the time he made it back to his home, exhaustion dripped from his bones and dusk had laid itself across the Earth. He opened the front door to release the hounds, who shouted “DAD!”, before darting throughout the yard. He grunted in response and moved to enter the home, only to stop dead in the doorway.

Winston felt it too. Will saw him prick up his ears at whatever it was that tingled the back of Will’s neck. Something within the periphery of the house watched them. Something that sent a chill across his skin.

Will’s gun reposed right by the door and he snatched it up. Spotting his dismay, the dogs gathered at his feet again, attentive.

“Follow me,” Will told them.

“Always,” said Uma. The others’ eyes moistened and Winston sneezed a little in agreement.

They surrounded Will like six furry shields along all of his sides as they journeyed through the trees. When Will commanded, "Spread out!" they quickened their pace and sniffed harder along the different rocks and roots. When he whistled, they returned to formation. This was their natural structure, the process of a pack in hunt. Together, they could take down anything. Together, they were invincible.

But after nearly an hour of searching, they found nothing. Winston nudged Will's hand and whimpered when he sensed his fatigue. The gun's holster had become slightly slick with sweat.

"I need to find it," Will said. "It killed Findlay. It will kill again."

"Yes," Winston said, "but maybe not tonight. And even so, maybe tonight is not the night we stop it."

Will's lips flickered into a tooth-filled grin and he ran his hand over Winston's head, massaging the occiput. "Don't tell your siblings, but I have never met a dog as wise as you."

Winston snorted, clearly pleased with himself.

Will cursed himself for letting his guard down when the skinny man stepped in between him and the door of the FBI building. Three wolf whistles, two "hey baby!"s, and one truck tailing after him on the highway this morning and now this. This guy in his way had even tied a bit of twine together to make into a ring.

"My name is Matt," said the man. Will fixed his gaze over Matt's shoulder at the door. He could move forward, but prior experience had taught him that some men pushed back and some men kissed back and Will hadn't had enough coffee yet to deal with either of those outcomes.

"Could you please let me inside, Matt?" Will said. "I'm already late."

"What's lateness when you meet your true love?" Matt asked. His voice had a horrible, creepy quality to it that may not have come into play just because of Will's curse. Will silently sent his regards to any person who sat through an entire date having to listen to it. "Time has slowed down for me. Where have you been all my life?"

A few government employees, their way into the building blocked, looked on in irritation and confusion. Two blonde agents Will recognized from the Nichols' house whispered to each other and pointed. Their faces held more humor than compassion. Will's heart sank.

But he didn't show it to Matt, instead rolling his eyes. "In a coma, waiting for true love's kiss, but I got tired of it and woke up. Move aside, I have a job to do."

Matt got to his feet and grabbed his hand. Will cringed and yanked away. Matt reached again and Will danced out of his grip, feeling absurd. Their audience chattered in excitement, their feet now planted even though Matt finally left enough space for a few to squeeze through.

Will's dread grew as he practiced a few more evasive moves, the sweat gathering on his palms. He never wanted to come to hitting anyone in order to get through his day. Not only was it not their fault that the curse made them do strange things, but Will didn't particularly like ending up in unpredictable situations like holding cells.

Matt's hand locked down on his wrist and the harder Will tugged, the more pressure he applied. Will met his eyes. They glimmered in a way that sent a primitive thrust of fear through his nervous system. "Got you."

"Ow!" one of the women complained, and there appeared Alana, her elbow digging into the woman's side. She took one look at Will's dilemma and didn't for a second hesitate.

"Hey!" Alana's bag bounced against her leg as she slammed both palms into Matt's chest, pushing him backward a good distance. "Back off!"

Matt momentarily turned on her. "Fuck off, lady! I'm—"

"He's not going to marry you, you slime bag," she said. "Go creep on a grizzly bear."

Alana's interference must have temporarily broke the enchantment because instead of making a retort, a funny expression passed over Matt. Recognizing the opportunity, Will dragged Alana inside. He refused to stop propelling her until they made it halfway to the labs.

"Good morning to you too," she said, rubbing her arm where he had had hold of her. "For the record, I have spoken to Aunt May about that, but all I got was a lecture. Apparently, if we consummated our love, we would send out hormone signals that would keep other potential suitors away."

"And if I was a fairy prince who wanted to have more than one lover?" Will asked drily.

"Feel free, just don't tell her," she said, smirking as they found the right door. Voices came out from the other side and when Will strained his hearing enough, he could identify them as Beverly's and Price's. "But in all seriousness, she was assuming that I was your one and only true love. Sex with me wouldn't actually work."

"I didn't consider it too much," Will assured her, turning the knob.

As the lab's sharp lights stabbed at his eyes, a sense of comfort filled him. This is where things became structured. Evidence arranged in neat lines across the countertops, agents bent over them in protective gear. Focused conversation, building theories into luxurious towers with logic and clues as bricks. Teamwork. Solutions. Things that Will could work with.

"Baby!"

Will cringed and took a step back as Beverly charged toward them. Either it took some time for the enchantment to sink in when it came to some women or, unlike men, women didn't always overtly act on their attraction. He was hoping that, after the Zeller and Jack proposals, that his relationship wouldn't further sour with this team, but so much for—

“Hi, honey!” Alana said, returning Beverly’s embrace. Will blinked, not sure if he felt like a weight had been lifted off his shoulders or slung across his face.

It certainly seemed more like the latter when Beverly slapped him on the shoulder. “Put that ego away, Graham!”

“Wait,” Will said, comprehension still dawning, “this is your new girlfriend?”

“Nice. You should see the look on your face,” said Beverly.

“This is she,” Alana said, kissing the corner of Beverly’s mouth. “We met a few months ago when I consulted on the Mulder Murders.”

“Ugh, that case was a pain. Come over here, I need to show you two what I found on Elise Nichols’ dress.” Beverly took Alana by the hand and pulled her over to one of the tables, which sat under Elise’s blood-stained nightgown. Will tagged after them like one of his dogs, studying the holes in the white fabric. Zeller said that a stag wouldn’t have killed by goring through the body, so the killer might have put the antlers through the girl. For what purpose? The Shrike wanted to preserve Elise after she died... could that have been his aim before? “Check it out!”

Between a pair of tweezers, Beverly held up a metallic shard. As she did, Will heard the door open and close behind him. He turned incrementally and nodded in acknowledgement as Jack, Price, and Zeller entered the room. Price responded with a wink. The day after meeting him, Will had agonized for hours over why Price never proposed until Alana pointed out, “He’s at least part goblin; didn’t you notice his fingernails?”

Will would have, had he known to look. Goblins resembled humans and they preferred big cities where they could blend in with the larger population, which meant that Will didn’t meet many of them. He had tucked Alana’s hint away for use and now studied Price’s long fingers from the corner of his eye, committing their shape and color to memory.

Zeller jolted him out of concentration, walking straight past him to reach the table where the body was laid out. Beverly didn’t quite watch him go by, although her eyebrows raised an inch higher than their default setting. Will ignored her and followed Zeller to the body, saying to the room, “We should be looking at plumbers, steam-fitters, tool-workers...”

One of the agents had surgically sliced open Elise’s chest cavity. Will stopped, his fingertips going numb at the sight of it. When he blinked, he saw the gaping hole in Findlay’s chest as vivid as if the centaur’s body had replaced Elise on the table. It rose to prominence in his vision, so cutting he could feel it in his own heart, then it faded again into a blur. Elise’s body returned. Will blinked again, dragging the dead centaur back from the depths of his mind. His fingers curled into his palms and dug into the skin there, blood pulsing in his wrists and in his ears.

“Her liver was removed,” Zeller said, stiffness lining his words. He bent over the body and peeled the body’s flesh back to demonstrate. “See that;he took it out and then he put it back in.”

“Why would he cut it out if he was just going to sew it back in again?” Price wanted to know, coming around to take a peek.

Alana’s heels clicked against the tile behind Will, sounding as distant as a memory. He swallowed. “There was something wrong with the meat.”

Zeller stared at the body’s insides a moment longer, then straightened up and stared at Will, boggled. “She has liver cancer.”

Price tapped at his chin with a long, yellow finger. Alana and Beverly had gone remarkably silent.

The corner of Will’s lip twitched, almost betraying his horrifying urge to laugh. “Yeah, he’s... he’s eating them.”

Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

Fairy Prince William of the Virginia Lands and Streams looks to his allies and gets much closer to the Minnesota Shrike.

Chapter Notes

Sooo guess what? The final chapter had to go through a pretty huge rewrite and ended up splitting in two. So this is your penultimate chapter! Enjoy!

Will blinked into Winston's fur, having rolled over and buried his face into the dog's ass sometime within the night. It took a moment for him to realize that Buster's steady growling had roused him from his rest. He turned over on his hip and peered around at the several other hairy masses hanging around the hearth, all heads lifted and ears perked up.

He started and stumbled to his feet, taking a hit of dizziness from the blood rushing to his head. Vision still blurry, he made his way as fast as he could toward the front door, grabbed the shotgun, and threw open his house. Buster nearly knocked him off his feet racing out to the yard and the rest of the pack soon followed, bumping hard against Will's legs.

"Which way?" Will and the rest of the pack yelled. "Which way did it go?"

Dawn's rosy fingers had pulled their way up the sky. A fine layer of frost covered the grass and nipped at Will's soles as he stepped out. The air didn't do him any favors either, lifting goose pimples on his bare chest and arms and riffling his thin, cotton pajama pants. The hand clutching the shotgun soon went white with tension and Will found himself whirling around every few steps, trying to account for all of his sides while the dogs spread unorganized across his property.

He became aware that he had begun to tremble only as hooves pounded into the dirt behind him. Lowering his gun, he turned to find Pelagia heading toward him with Stella as escort. Buster darted toward them like a missile, shrieking, "I FOUND HER, DAD, I FOUND THE INTRUDER!"

Will's whistle pierced the air loud enough to startle the birds in the nearest tree. "Hey, shut up, mister!" the lady bird of the nest yelled. "Some of us are trying to sleep!"

“Sorry,” Will said, too low for her to hear. But the whistle changed Buster’s intentions anyway and now the small, hyper mutt careened toward him. Stella broke from Pelagia’s side and the others gathered as well, creating a formidable army of hair behind him as he approached the centauress. “Good morning, Pelagia.”

“Good morning, Prince William,” she said, her disapproval unmasked. “You have not called for close to five days now.”

“I had no reason to call, I’m afraid,” Will said, running his hand through his hair self-consciously. It surely looked like a rat’s lair at the moment. “The dogs and I have searched for your brother’s killer every night since his death. We haven’t had any luck.”

“The rainbow trout of the stream inform me that they see him lurking by the waters every evening. The canaries of the south think that his lair must be nearby their nests because they spot him before the sun rises every morning. Have you inquired with anyone at all?”

He had not. Aside from Jeremy the Ex (and ex-toad), he had never spoken with any neighbor who hadn’t approached him first. Maybe it had been hubris, but the idea of changing that habit in order to solve a murder investigation seemed somewhat outlandish.

Perhaps he had a mistake to admit.

“I am so sorry. I promise to do better from now on. I assure you that we bring this thing to justice.”

“Your promises are turning out to mean little, Prince William,” she said, pawing the ground. She didn’t play gentle with his lawn, digging a significant if short trench into the mud. The hair on the back of Will’s neck raised; although Pelagia had seemed somewhat reasonable thus far, centaurs in general were known to have sudden bursts of temper. “I want my brother’s killer under my hooves soon.”

“Three days,” Will said. An impulsive move brought this on, one that he almost immediately regretted once done. It came out of an urge to appease, not what he thought he might achieve. “Uh—I’ll bring him to you as soon as I can.”

“Three days it is,” she said, firm. With only a swish of her blonde tail as a goodbye, she disappeared back into the forest.

As soon as he was certain of her departure, Will resumed his shivering.

With another day of police work, Will and the FBI investigative team hashed out a few more details from Elise Nichols’ corpse. Most of this sprouted from Will theorizing that the deer antlers had entered her body after the killer had mounted her on them, like a hunting prize. Between that, the piece of metal Beverly had salvaged from Elise’s nightgown, and some further profiling on Alana’s part, they narrowed down their first priority list of possible suspects to a few thousand.

“Keep working, people,” Jack said, the usual storm cloud thundering over his head. “I need more to go on than this.”

Will stood in front of the other victims’ pictures, barely blinking. For the millionth time, he categorized everything he knew about them.

Same color hair.

Same color eyes.

Same race.

Same height.

Same weight.

All around the same age, in university.

He repeated this like a mantra over and over again, trying to take his mind off of Findlay. He tried to pull away from the slitted body, the neatness and skill of the crime under all the blood. Elise Nichols’ murderer had not violated her with such appalling presentation. He had returned her to the place where she had known the most peace, where she had had life and vitality and love and...

He had loved her.

Elise Nichols’ murderer had loved her.

Much to his frustration, Jack didn’t buy this. “There was no semen. There was no saliva. Elise Nichols died a virgin; she stayed that way—“

“That’s not how he’s loving them, he wouldn’t disrespect them that way,” Will said. “He doesn’t want these girls to suffer, he kills them quickly and, to his thinking, with mercy.”

Beverly, Price, and Zeller stared from their positions in the lab. A flush of heat crept up Will’s neck as he realized that he had almost reached shouting proportions. He felt defensive of the murderer, he realized, and hastily compartmentalized this and shoved it down to a far corner in his mind.

“He has a daughter. Same physical features as all the other girls. She’s an only child. She’s leaving home. He can’t stand the thought of losing her.”

Zeller let out a long breath. “Back to the census records then?”

“It’s going to take a long time to get through 7,500 of those,” Will said, before catching Beverly smirking at Price. Price’s face screwed up at her like she had popped a lemon wedge into his mouth.

“We have a secret weapon for that,” she said.

“I tried to keep it a secret from them, but when it’s between the certain deaths of more people and hiding your numbers trick, what’s a man going to do?” Price sighed later on in the night as he and Will clicked through census records on their respective monitors. Will had stayed

back after the rest of the team left, not just to help Price out, but to learn more about him. He couldn't stop thinking about what Pelagia had said that morning and how he had never made the effort to learn what he should have, depending on Alana to point out anomalies.

"Does your skill truly only come down to 'being good with numbers' as you said or is there something different at play?" Will asked.

"Well, first off, Grandma Gremma—may her spirit find safety over the last hill..." Price made some motion in the air with his fingers, seeming to shape a circle and then slash through it twice. It strongly reminded Will of one crossing themselves except it came with a heavy dose of sarcasm, as if Price had practiced this a million times before and had long tired of it, "She would have been able to do this with much more speed and accuracy than myself. What we goblins see is more of a deeper representation of numbers. It's easier when they're handwritten rather than typed, but if I squint at every single number of dependents I can catch a glimpse of who the dependents are and how they relate on an emotional and social level to the person they're dependent on."

Will raised his eyebrows, surprised by how interested he found himself. He spent most of his days avoiding socialization and, when forced into it, refused to allow the other person to break surface level. Only Alana had ever hooked him into a deeper grip. But he had accepted this because, while he now loved her as the person she was, he had needed her for what she could do for him more. "You can do this and yet you're in forensics of all things."

"What do you expect me to do, fortune-telling?" Price scoffed. "Call me a baby, why don't you."

"Sorry, I just meant..." Will started before stopping himself. Price looked slightly too amused, like the way he did when he ribbed Zeller. "Have you ever been a part of any cases where the victim was—"

"A centaur?"

Will huffed. "I was going to say non-human, but, of course, how absurd of me to think that word had not spread to the goblin community."

"Very absurd," Price agreed, adding another possible lead to his collection. "I don't envy you, buddy. I met a centaur once and it was my worst nightmare so I can't imagine working for them. Granted, that centaur did try to carry off my fiancé..."

"Thought that was a fairy prince," Will said, his turn to be dry.

Price didn't miss a beat. "He came next, but that's okay. I'm sure that these centaurs will get him for me."

Will's mouth turned down in displeasure as Price whistled his way through emailing him his final list. A moment later, the message came through to Will's inbox with a winking emoticon as the subject line.

But he had his suspects now. 37 in total. Within them, somewhere for sure, was the Minnesota Shrike.

The End

Chapter Summary

Does Prince William of the Virginia Lands and Streams get his happily ever after like in all the fairy tales? Find out here.

Chapter Notes

This is the end! Thank you one last time for all your enthusiasm, this has been a trip :)))

Garret Jacob Hobbes lived in a quiet, tidy suburb with his wife and 17-year-old daughter, Abigail. He was the 21st man on Will's list.

Will didn't find out that Hobbes was the Minnesota Shrike from talking to him and recognizing his curt style. He didn't find out from entering his home and gazing at all the deer-made materials, made by a hunter with a desire to not waste a thread of his prey. He didn't find out from Hobbes attacking him—or worse, attacking his own family.

No, the Wendigo prevented all of that. It stood in the shadows of Hobbes' house, watching Will with its blank eyes and sad mouth. It was still mostly made up of too tall antlers and a stark ribcage, but Will sensed its aura. The Wendigo had eaten and for some time had perhaps found itself sated. But now it once again hungered.

“Are you here for him or for me?”

Findlay's murderer did not respond, likely could not respond. Motionless, it waited. For a few moments, Will briefly considered letting it have Hobbes. It seemed to him a worthy possibility; the man would be consumed as he had consumed all those poor girls and what's more, his body would waste in the way he had loathed waste.

But he shook himself out of it. Out here, he was not royalty, he was merely a special agent. He could only act within those confines.

By the time Jack and his back-up pulled up to the Hobbes' home, to where Will would knife open a pillow and show them the brown hair that filled it, the Wendigo had long vanished.

The closing of the Minnesota Shrike investigation as well as the celebration that came after left Will agonizing over the small amount of time he had left to catch the other case tasked to him. By the time he had taken the bus back to his designated stop about two hours from Quantico and drove the hour's way back to his cabin in his old, beaten up car, the rest of the daylight hours had run from his reach. He knew he would not find the inky black centaur killer within the darkness of the night. And although he should have felt cheered by the saving of Abigail Hobbes, as well as several girls who resembled her, from her fate, the image of a hoof driving into his skull kept his heart pounding and his palms sweating.

He fed the dogs and released them into the yard. They all came back into the house with hardly a "woof" and he sat down for three fingers of whisky. The Wendigo would come for him, he knew this. Yet, after bedding down with his pack, he tossed and turned for awhile before settling down into a spasmodic sleep, broken several times from twitching limbs and doggy farts.

Fatigue formed a dull headache that joined him as a companion the next morning. He fixed himself a coffee with about half of his normal speed and dropped himself into one of the kitchen chairs. As he lifted the mug to take his first sip, a flutter of movement caught in his peripheral vision. He looked up.

The dark face gazed back through the window. It didn't stay long; only enough time for Will to admire the strange smoothness of its antlers in the sunlight and the deep crevices in its forehead, betraying its older age. Its usual expression had returned, catching it between a sense of wisdom and strain. In beholding Will, it seemed in pain.

Will's heart pounded three times, then slowed.

The Wendigo went away.

Will stood up, his weariness forgotten. He reached for the gun yet again, but with less impetuosity this time. Constantly readjusting his grip with both his hands, he ran out of the house. He went around to the back, where he spotted the Wendigo waiting for him at the edge of the forest. The black, bony body turned toward the trees and Will gave chase.

He chased the Wendigo through the bramble bushes, thorns clawing at toes and tearing at his pajama bottoms. He chased it through the rockier side of the hill, where human litter caught between the stones. He chased it past the canary homes, where the traitors had twittered their news to Pelagia.

He chased the Wendigo to a stream miles away from his home. The water lapped at his bare feet, carrying blood off the wounds and away for the fish to breathe. Will and Wendigo stood mere feet apart, considering one another. No cabin walls separated them, no dogs were present to charge and holler, no centaurs stood near to murder or help. Just them and their empty space.

Will threw away his gun. The Wendigo closed the gap between them.

Its lengthy fingers combed through his hair, soft, almost comforting, before closing in a death grip. As Will's jaw dropped open in a gasp, it covered his lips with its own, a shocking

amount of heat transferring from its black skin to his stubbly flesh. The tongue, twisting and controlled, licked its way into his mouth. Will closed his eyes with a shudder, giving himself into the odd sensation.

Giving himself up to this force, which backed him up against a willow tree. As the bark scratched up his back, the Wendigo's nails scratched up his front. It pinched his nipples, dragged down with its nails, carved shapes into his abdominals. Its tongue retracted from his throat and it kissed his jaw, then downward. Under his ear. On his throat, the dip between his clavicle and his neck.

Then his eyes burst open wide as it bit down fiercely on his shoulder, drawing blood. He grabbed it by its own shoulders and screamed as the teeth deepened. It ignored his attempts to detach until the fearful exclamation turned into a sob, in which case it petted his hair again. Some whispery, wordless sound emitted from it, soothing. It almost rocked him back into comfort before it bit down again, as hard as before, and ripped the remains of his pajamas off his hips. This time, Will did not cry, only silently absorbed the feeling of its black erection pressed against his stomach.

He expected it to turn him around, press his face against the bark, and fuck him from the back. It didn't. It kissed him again, then hiked up his legs around its waist, and pressed in. Will was left clutching the tree behind him for desperate balance as the Wendigo jerked and released its guttural sounds, moving in and out of him with slick motions.

It hurt about as much as it pleased and Will endured it with as much patience as he could. But finally it came that his arms ached too much from holding them up and that the burn inside of him grew instead of subsided. With an abrupt motion, pushing off of the tree, he shoved all of his weight onto the Wendigo. It crashed to the ground, bringing Will with it, its cock slipping out of his body.

He pinned the thing by the bony chest to the ground and let it squirm against him for a moment. However, his own hunger fought him and he gave up the play battle to position himself back over the Wendigo. Its eyes may have widened as he bore down on its midnight prick, moaning as it now fit just right inside of him.

Will rode the Wendigo for all that it was worth, making ecstatic noises as it hit him again and again in the just the right spot. The smell of sodden earth filled his nostrils, their soundtrack the running stream crashing over stone. His thighs begged for mercy as he moved against the Wendigo and he brushed his lips against its gasping mouth as pressure built in his balls. He felt himself racing toward the top of this grand journey and closed his eyes to welcome the incoming tide. Yes, yes...

"Yes, yes, yes," he moaned as he came, cum splashing back against his stomach and chest. Under him, the Wendigo's gasps turned into completing sighs and a wetness filled him up. Will settled down onto his knees as the prick softened inside of him.

He took a few moments to catch his breath before opening his eyes with trepidation.

In the Wendigo's place laid a man, with graying sandy hair and waxy skin. Will let out a sigh of relief as he took in the man's handsome countenance, his fine form. He had cheekbones

sharp enough to cut, eyes deep pools of something incorrigible, and a mouth covered in Will's blood. A mouth that twitched into a very slight grin as he read Will's reaction.

"Hello there," Will said, lifting himself up so that the man slipped out of him. "Who might you be?"

"Count Hannibal Lecter, of Lithuania," the man said. He picked up Will's hand and pressed a kiss to the back of it. Despite himself, Will was charmed. "Thank you, Prince Will, for breaking my curse."

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